

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Preliminary Environmental Assessment
Cove Allotment Division Fence Extensions**

April 3, 2013

DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2013-0004-EA

PREPARING OFFICE

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Introduction

This document identifies issues, analyzes alternatives, and discloses the potential environmental impacts associated with the Cove Allotment Division Fence Extension. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ely District Office proposes to authorize and construct the Cove Allotment Division Fence Extensions in cooperation with the livestock permittee on the Cove Allotment. This range improvement project is consistent with achieving the Standards and Guidelines for Nevada's Mojave-Southern Great Basin Area, which were developed by the Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC).

Identifying Information:

Title, EA number, and type of project:

Cove Allotment Division Fence Extensions

DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2013-0004-EA

Location of Proposed Action:

The following is the location of the proposed fences:

T. 19N, R. 61E, Sections: 16, 20, 21, 22, 27 (see Map 1, "Cove Allotment Proposed Fence Extensions" (p. 21))

Name and Location of Preparing Office:

Lead Office - Egan Field Office, LLNVL01000

HC 33 Box 33500

Ely, NV 89301

Applicant Name:

Daren and Rebecca Jenson

Purpose and Need for Action:

The BLM's purpose for the proposed fence is to improve livestock management on the Cove Allotment, thereby help in progressing toward achieving the standards and guidelines for rangeland health as approved by Nevada's Mojave—Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council. The need is to implement a rotational grazing systems and improve cattle distribution.

Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues:

Internal scoping was conducted by a BLM interdisciplinary (ID) team on September 24, 2012 to identify any resource concerns or issues associated with the proposed action. Preliminary issues identified were

Would soil compaction result from the installation of the fence extensions?

What would the effects be to rangeland health?

What are the effects on special status animal species if this project is implemented?

What would the effects be to the vegetative resources and would those effects be long term or short term?

A scoping letter was mailed to the interested public on December 27, 2012 and a summary of the project was posted on the eGov for Planning and NEPA (ePlanning Front Office) website on December 28, 2012. Comments were received from Nevada Department of Wildlife requesting analysis on mule deer and antelope migration within the project area. No other comments were received.

Tribal consultation letters were sent on February 14, 2013.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Description of the Proposed Action:

The previous chapter presented the Purpose and Need for the proposed projects, as well as the relevant issues, i.e., those elements that could be affected by the implementation of the proposed project. To meet the purpose and need of the proposed projects in a way that resolves the issues, the BLM has developed alternatives. These alternatives, including a no action alternative, are presented below. The potential environmental effects resulting from the implementation of each alternative are then analyzed in Chapter 3 for each of the identified issues in Table 4.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct less than 2.0 miles of fence. This fence would be built in two sections and would complete the already existing fence located in the Cove Allotment (see Map 1, “Cove Allotment Proposed Fence Extensions” (p. 21)).

The west section of fence would be approximately a 1.5 mile long section, running in a westerly direction. This section of fence would begin at the west end of the existing fence and run into a rocky outcropping, which provides a natural boundary. The east section of fence would be approximately a 0.3 miles long section, running in an easterly direction. This section of fence would begin at the east end of the existing fence and end at an existing private land boundary fence.

Fence construction could involve the use of a tractor with a post-hole diggers/pounder attached, pick-up trucks and/or all terrain vehicles (ATV), or other similar equipment as necessary. Existing roads would be utilized to the extent possible for the construction of the proposed fence extensions. There will be a need for overland travel for a portion of the proposed fence extensions, which totals less than one mile. Overland travel should be limited to within 15 feet of the fenceline. The fence would be constructed to meet Agency specifications (see Figure 3, “Fence Specifications” (p. 27)) regarding cattle and wildlife (BLM Manual 1737), consisting of a smooth bottom wire and three strands of barbed wire. Fence posts and stretch panels would consist of steel T-posts and steel pipe panels. Markers would be attached to multiple wires between posts during construction to alert livestock and/or wildlife to the new fence (RMP 2008). Standard operating procedures (SOP) that are applicable to this project would be followed from the programmatic district fenceline Environmental Assessment NV-040-05-027.

Additional stipulations include:

- Permittee will coordinate with the BLM Rangeland Management Specialist and/or Operations Staff before beginning construction
- Permittee will be responsible for all materials supplied by the BLM
- Permittee will complete the construction within 30 days of picking up materials from the BLM
- Permittee will coordinate with the BLM Rangeland Management Specialist and/or Operations Staff when construction is completed for a final project inspection
- Any excess materials will be returned to the BLM within 15 days of project completion

- Any refuse produced during the construction process will be removed from public lands

The Cove Allotment permittees have agreed to install and maintain the fence extensions, as well as the existing fence, through an updated cooperative agreement. The Bureau of Land Management has agreed to supply the fencing materials such as posts, wire, and end posts for the new construction of the fence extensions.

Occasional maintenance and/or repair of the existing fence could require overland travel with a pick-up truck or ATV.

Maintenance of fences is defined as the labor and materials needed to keep an existing fence in a condition adequate to prevent livestock movement through, under, or over the fence. At this time maintenance responsibility would consist of:

- Ensuring that all strands of fence wire between fence posts are tightly stretched and secured to the fence posts by metal clips or staples as appropriate for the type of post
- Ensuring that all fence posts are securely in place and that bent, broken, or missing posts and stays are replaced as needed
- Ensuring that all wooden stretch panels, corner braces, and gate posts are securely in place and in sound condition — rotten or broken wood posts must be replaced as needed
- Ensuring that all strands of fence wire and fence spacing wires or wood poles which form the gates are properly stretched and secured; in addition, each gate should have a suitable smooth retaining wire or latch for secure closure of the gate
- Ensuring that the appropriate Agency standards are maintained
- Any refuse produced during the maintenance process will be removed from public lands

Migratory Birds

Fence construction is not anticipated during the migratory bird nesting period, from April 1 to July 30. If any construction is necessary during that period, a survey of the areas to be disturbed would be completed by a wildlife biologist prior to construction to identify active nests so that they may be avoided.

Noxious and Invasive Weeds

A Weed Risk Assessment was conducted in conjunction with this project. Any stipulations listed in the Weed Risk Assessment (see Appendix C (p. 22)) would be followed during construction of the fences.

Monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted in the form of compliance checks during and after construction of the project. Rangeland monitoring data would continue to be collected in accordance with the Ely District Approved Resource Management Plan (August 2008).

Description of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail:

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative represents the status quo. Under the no action alternative, the fence extensions would not be constructed and current management strategies for the area would continue.

Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

Herding was also identified as an alternative to the proposed action, but the current livestock operator has been employing this method for a number of years and has not been successful in controlling livestock drift between the north and south use areas.

Conformance

Proposed action

The proposed action is in conformance with the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (August 20, 2008). The following are resource goals and/or objectives that apply:

Livestock Grazing: “Manage livestock grazing on public lands to provide for a level of livestock grazing consistent with multiple use, sustained yield, and watershed function and health.” (pg. 85).

Soil Resources: “Maintain or improve long-term soil quality”. “To ensure that soils throughout the planning area exhibit infiltration and permeability appropriate to the soil type, with erosion and compaction having minimal effect on soil quality” (pg. 23).

SR-1: Restore and maintain desired range of conditions to increase infiltration, conserve soil moisture, promote groundwater recharge, and ground cover composition (including litter and biotic crusts) to increase or maintain surface soil stability and nutrient cycling.

Vegetative Resources: “To manage for resistant and resilient ecological conditions including healthy, productive, and diverse populations of native or desirable nonnative plant species appropriate to the site characteristics” (pg. 26).

No Action Alternative

The no action alternative is also in conformance with the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (August 20, 2008). The current management plans for the area are designed to achieve the Ely District management goals.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans:

The proposed action is in compliance with the following laws, regulations, Executive Orders, county public land plans, and other plans:

- Mojave-Southern Great Basin Area Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Standards and Guidelines (2006).
- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended 1975 and 1994)

- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. §§ 1701-1782, October 21, 1976, as amended 1978, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990-1992, 1994 and 1996)
- State Protocol Agreement between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Nevada and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (January, 2012)
- National Historic Preservation Act (Public Law 89-665; 16 U.S.C. 470 as amended through 2000)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712, July 3, 1918, as amended 1936, 1960, 1968, 1969, 1974, 1978, 1986 and 1989)
- Executive Order 13186: Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds (2001)

Tiering

This document is tiered to the following documents:

- Ely Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS), November, 2007
- Cove Allotment Division Fence Environmental Assessment NV-040-5-27-S1-2000, June 14, 2000
- Programmatic Fenceline Environmental Assessment EA-NV-040-5-27, June, 1986

Affected Environment:

Project Area Description

The Cove Allotment encompasses approximately 26,538 public land acres and the project area is defined as a small portion, approximately 8 acres, of the Cove Allotment. The grazing allotment occurs within Nye County and is situated approximately 45 miles southwest of Ely, Nevada (see Map 1, “Cove Allotment Proposed Fence Extensions” (p. 21)). Part of the Cove Allotment is within the White River Herd Area.



Photo of the proposed west section of the fence, taken facing east, approximately 1.5 miles in length and will tie into the existing Cove Fence

Figure 1. Cove Allotment Proposed Fence Extension - West Portion



Photo of the proposed east section of the fence, taken facing east, approximately 0.3 miles in length and will end at an existing private property boundary fence

Figure 2. Cove Allotment Proposed Fence Extension - East Portion

There is one permittee with permitted livestock grazing use on the Cove Allotment:

Table 1. Permitted livestock grazing use on the Cove Allotment in White Pine County, Nevada:

Operator Number	Allotment Name	Period of Use	Livestock Kind	AUMs
2703801	Cove	11/01 to 04/15	Cattle	1550

Resources/Concerns Considered for Analysis

The following items have been evaluated for the potential for significant impacts to occur, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, due to implementation of the proposed action. Consideration of some of these items is to ensure compliance with laws, statutes or Executive Orders that impose certain requirements upon all Federal actions. Other items are relevant to the management of public lands in general and to the Ely BLM in particular.

Resource/Concern Considered	Issue(s) Analyzed	Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis
Air Quality	No	During the construction phase, isolated dust occurrences and/or exhaust emissions may occur but will be negligible and will not exceed State of Nevada standards.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	No	No ACEC's occur within or adjacent to the project area. No further analysis is necessary.
Cultural Resources	No	A Class III cultural resource inventory was completed for the proposed project under report # 8111 NV-04-13-2037. No eligible properties under the National Register of Historic Places were present, thereby, there are no adverse effects. No further analysis is necessary.
Environmental Justice	No	No minority or low-income groups would be disproportionately affected by health or environmental effects. Concern is not present.
Fish and Wildlife	No	Winter mule deer (<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>) habitat is present, with some areas to the north and south identified as crucial. The project lies within year round pronghorn antelope (<i>Antilocapra americana</i>) habitat. Design features of the proposed action including attaching markers to the wires between posts during construction to alert wildlife to the new fence will help to reduce impacts. General habitat could be maintained or improved by the proposed action or alternatives if the habitat north and south of the fence is allowed critical growing season rest on a regular basis.
Floodplains	No	Resource is not present within the project area.
Forest Health	No	Resource is not present within the project area.
Lands and Realty	No	There are no conflicting Right-of-Ways within the project area.
Migratory Birds	No	Fence construction is not anticipated during the migratory bird nesting period from April 1 to July 30. If construction is necessary during that period, a survey of the areas to be disturbed would be completed by a wildlife biologist prior to construction in order to identify active nests so that they may be avoided.
Mineral Resources	No	No mineral operations occur within the project area.
Native American Religious Concerns and other concerns	No	No traditional religious or cultural sites have been identified within or adjacent to the project area.
Noxious and Invasive Weed Management	No	A weed risk assessment was completed on November 5, 2012. Best Management Practices will be utilized to prevent new infestations. No further analysis is necessary.
Paleontological Resources	No	There are no currently identified resources within the project area.

Resource/Concern Considered	Issue(s) Analyzed	Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis
Prime and Unique Farmlands	No	Resource is not present within the project area.
Rangeland Health	Yes	The proposed action and alternatives are intended to improve rangeland health of the project area. A more detailed analysis is provided in Chapters 3 and 4 of this document.
Recreation Uses	No	Recreational uses are not anticipated to be impacted based on the proposed action.
Special Status Animal Species, other than those listed or proposed by the FWS as Threatened or Endangered	Yes	<p>The project area does not contain either Preliminary Priority or Preliminary General Habitat for greater sage grouse (<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>), nor are there any leks within 15 miles. Special status bird species such as the golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), ferruginous hawk (<i>Buteo regalis</i>), and loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>) may be present within or near the project area. Adherence to the minimization measure in the Migratory Bird section of the proposed action, would avoid impacts to most Special Status avian species.</p> <p>Due to the ground disturbing activity described in the proposed action, impacts to pygmy rabbits (<i>Brachylagus idahoensis</i>) are analyzed in the EA.</p>
Special Status Plant Species, other than those listed or proposed by the FWS as Threatened or Endangered	No	No sensitive plant species are found within the project area. Currant milkvetch (<i>Astragalus uncialis</i>), has been found within three miles of the west end of the project.
Soil Resources	Yes	Direct impacts to soils during construction and indirect impacts due to changes in livestock use are expected. Further analyzed in the EA.
Threatened or Endangered Species or critical habitat	No	There are no Threatened or Endangered species listed or proposed for listing known to occur within the project area.
Vegetative Resources	Yes	Direct impacts to vegetation during construction and indirect impacts due to changes in livestock use are expected. Further analyzed in the EA.
Visual Resources	No	The proposed action is consistent with the VRM Class IV objectives, therefore no direct or cumulative impacts to visual resources are anticipated.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	No	The proposed action or alternatives would not produce hazardous or solid waste.
Water Resources	No	The proposed action will not impact water resources.
Wilderness	No	No wilderness occurs within or adjacent to the project area. No further analysis is necessary.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	No	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) are not present within or adjacent to the project area. No further analysis is necessary.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No	No riparian areas and/or wetland zones are present in the proposed project area. No further analysis is necessary.
Wild Horses	No	The project area is within the White River Herd Area (HA). Wild horses may be temporarily disturbed during the construction phase(s) of the fence extensions. The west portion of fence extension lies within the White River Herd Area but will remain open ended, allowing horses to utilize both the north and south pastures of the Cove Allotment. The east portion of the fence extension falls outside the HA. Following construction, wild horses should return to normal behavior.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	No Wild and Scenic Rivers occur within or adjacent to the project area. No further analysis is necessary.

Affected Environment

Rangeland Health

The following is a summary of the Standards Determination Document completed in 2008 for the E.H. Gubler, Inc. term grazing permit renewal, based on the Mojave—Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Standards:

Allotment	Standard 1: Upland Sites	Standard 2: Riparian and Wetland Sites	Standard 3: Habitat
Cove	Achieving the Standard	Not Assessed (No Riparian Areas Present)	Not achieving the Standard, but making significant progress towards. Livestock are a contributing factor to not achieving the standard

The Cove Allotment encompasses approximately 26,538 acres of winterfat dominated rangeland. There are non-native species, such as Halogeton and Russian thistle, present throughout the allotment. The Cove Allotment is characterized by valleys, bench lands and foothills, with elevations ranging from 5,328 to 7,635 feet above sea level. Precipitation levels average 8–10 inches on the lower bench lands and occurs primarily as winter snow, spring rains and/or fall thunderstorms.

The SDD described the existing Cove Allotment Fence as being ineffective in its current state, which is open ended on the east and west ends. The recommendation was to complete both ends of the fence, which would provide an opportunity to establish a true rotational grazing system.

Special Status Species

Pygmy Rabbit

The pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) is currently designated as a BLM Sensitive Species in Nevada. It is a sagebrush obligate species which prefers areas of tall, dense sagebrush growing in deep soils which are friable and suitable for digging burrows; and is often found along washes or drainages where soils are deep and sagebrush is tall (Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010). Potential habitat has been identified within the project area. Pygmy rabbits were surveyed within their historic range in Nevada between 2003 and 2006 (Larrucea and Brussard, 2008). Larrucea and Brussard (2008) found current populations of pygmy rabbits throughout all of the species' historic range in Nevada, including one near the proposed project site. The majority of the project area is in friable soil with some areas of thick, taller brush, but the soil is gravelly, which does not appear to constitute preferred pygmy rabbit habitat.

Soil Resources

The proposed fence extensions would occur in 3 soil mapping units which are found on the Moorman Spring NW and Callaway Well 1:24,000 scale topographic quadrangle maps within the Nye County Northeast Part Soil Survey:

1. Unit 3091 (Univega-Clowfin-Molion Association)
2. Unit 3972 (Linoyer Very Fine Sandy Loam 0 to 4% slopes)
3. Unit 3210 (Kunzler-Sycomat Association)

The soils in these mapping units occur on fan piedmonts, piedmont remnants, and former stream terraces and are alluvium derived from mixed rocks. Slopes are 0 to 8%. Soils are typically well drained and moderately deep, and some have a duripan restrictive layer. Soils are predominantly sandy loams and gravelly sandy loams. Annual precipitation is 6 to 10 inches. Typical vegetation is winterfat, fourwing saltbush, Indian ricegrass, shadscale, black greasewood, big sagebrush, and basin wildrye.

The Standards Determination Document completed in 2008 for the E.H. Gubler, Inc. term grazing permit renewal found that soils in this area were stable, functioning normally, and were achieving the standard for the Mojave—Southern RAC area.

Vegetative Resources

The project areas are sagebrush dominated rangeland, with some perennial grasses and forbs present.

Environmental Effects:

Direct and Indirect Effects

Rangeland Health

Proposed Action

The proposed fence extensions to the existing fence in the Cove Allotment would improve livestock management by preventing drift between the north and south pastures. Restricting livestock movement between the two pastures would help prevent over use or repeated use of forage and ensure cattle remained in the correct pasture. It is anticipated that the construction activities of installing the two sections of fence would result in very minor disturbance to the vegetation because the total area is less than 8.0 acres. The westerly section will be constructed along an existing two track road for the majority of the 1.5 miles of fence. The easterly section of fence will require overland travel but is less than 0.5 miles, so any disturbance that did occur would likely recover rapidly and would not result in areas of excessive impacts or erosion because vegetation would remain on the areas of disturbance. These activities would likely not inhibit the achievement or progression towards the rangeland health standards.

Overall the proposed action would improve livestock distribution, use flexibility and livestock management which is anticipated to improve soil and vegetative/habitat conditions throughout the Cove Allotment and assist in progressing towards or achieving the rangeland health standards and guidelines.

No Action Alternative

The current conditions would likely continue to occur (see Affected Environment section above). This action would continue to allow livestock to drift between the north and south pastures of the Cove Allotment. Although the current management plan for this grazing allotment has been designed to continue to progress towards the achievement or achieve the rangeland health standards and maintain healthy and productive rangelands and wildlife habitat, this action does not employ the available tools or provide the opportunities that the proposed action does to improve vegetative conditions throughout the Cove Allotment.

Special Status Species

Proposed Action

Pygmy Rabbit

Although no pygmy rabbits are known to occupy the project area, construction activities of the fence may disturb individual rabbits or destroy individual burrows that may be present. These risks would be avoided by surveying the areas to be disturbed prior to construction. In addition, fences have also been known to provide a perch for raptors, which also can poses a risk of predation (Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010). As stated earlier, the fence would be constructed with steel T-posts which may reduce the risk of providing perches for raptors. Although the project would result in temporary crushing of sagebrush vegetation, overall footprint of the action (approximately 8 acres) is very small compared to the amount of potential habitat for the pygmy rabbit that currently exists in and around the project area. In addition, it is not anticipated that these activities would affect the pygmy rabbit population(s) in or around the project. The Fish and Wildlife Service has concluded that developments such as the fencing described have not been

documented to be a threat to pygmy rabbit (Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010). Completion of the project during the late summer/early fall period would reduce other disturbance impacts.

No Action Alternative

There would be no new portions of fence to pose a danger to pygmy rabbits.

Soil Resources

Proposed Action

Direct effects would include minor compaction of soils from equipment travel in areas outside of existing roads. The effects of soil compaction from the equipment would be temporary and may be reduced by conducting the off-road travel on dry soils.

No Action Alternative

No new ground disturbing activity would occur. Current conditions would continue.

Vegetative Resources

Proposed Action

Direct impacts from the proposed action would include the temporary crushing and removal of some sagebrush vegetation within the project area (approximately 8 acres) of the surrounding 26,538 acres of sagebrush rangeland during construction. Desert vegetation can take many years to recover, with grasses reestablishing first, followed by forbs and shrubs. Recovery of vegetation is primarily dependent on precipitation following construction. Indirect impacts would include increased grazing and trampling along the new fenceline extensions.

No Action Alternative

Vegetation would not be disturbed by construction and livestock would not move into the portions of the allotment at a higher density, grazing and trampling vegetation.

Cumulative Effects

Introduction

As required under NEPA and the regulations implementing NEPA, this section analyzes potential cumulative impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions combined with the Proposed Action within the area analyzed for impacts in Chapter 3 specific to the resources for which cumulative impacts may be anticipated. A cumulative impact is defined as “the impact which results from the incremental impact of the action, decision, or project when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.7).

Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Past Actions

Livestock and wild horse grazing has a long history in the region dating back to the late 1800's. Throughout its history, livestock grazing has been characterized by localized areas of intense use. In many areas in which this intense grazing occurred there is a lack of herbaceous cover and

they are primarily shrub dominate. Hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities have occurred within the project area for many years. Off highway vehicle (OHV) use has occurred on the roads and two-tracks within the area. Range improvement projects have occurred in the area to improve grazing management and include fencing and maintenance of stock water developments.

Present Actions

The project area is currently being grazed by livestock. Current livestock grazing management can be characterized as moderate use of the available forage. Hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities occur within the project area occasionally throughout the year. This includes the use of the existing two-track and developed roads in the area. OHV use currently occurs on the roads and two-tracks within the project area. Maintenance of range improvements is ongoing and generally includes repairing fences and stock water troughs. These maintenance activities generally require the use of existing two-track and developed roads.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

It is anticipated that hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities would continue to occur within the project area year round. OHV use is likely to occur on the roads and two-tracks within the project area. Maintenance of range improvements would likely continue. New range improvement projects are considered and analyzed on a site-specific basis. It is anticipated that livestock would likely continue at current levels. The SWIP transmission line has been installed and crosses through the project area immediately adjacent to the proposed fence.

Cumulative Effects Analysis

Rangeland Health

Proposed Action

It is anticipated that the proposed action, in combination with the past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, would continue to achieve or progress towards achieving the rangeland health standards and guidelines within the allotment and could provide for the desired habitat and rangeland health conditions over the long term.

The proposed action would improve livestock management and increase distribution and more uniform use throughout the Cove Allotment and decreasing constant and/or repeated use of herbaceous vegetation in particular areas of the allotments. In addition, it would also increase the flexibility of the use on the north and south pastures of the Cove Allotment and help prevent constant or repeated use and over utilization of herbaceous vegetation. The impacts from maintenance activities would be negligible compared to the overall area of the allotment and the functionality of the completed fence extensions, which would improve livestock distribution and management for the overall achievement of rangeland health standards.

No Action Alternative

It is anticipated that the no action alternative in combination with the past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, would allow current conditions to continue to occur. Current livestock management plans are designed to continue to achieve or progress towards achieving the rangeland health standards with the current conditions. It can be assumed that the no action alternative would also continue to achieve or progress towards achieving the rangeland health standards, but at a slower rate. However, this action would allow livestock to continue to drift

between the north and south pastures, continue to allow repeated use of vegetation in specific areas, and continue to limit distribution and flexibility of use on Cove Allotment.

Special Status Species

Proposed Action

The long term effects from the construction activities of the fence extensions are anticipated to recover at normal rates and continue to provide suitable habitat for pygmy rabbit. The effect from maintenance activities, as described in future actions, is not anticipated to affect pygmy rabbits.

No Action Alternative

The no action alternative, in combination with the other actions, would likely continue the current status in the area.

Soil Resources

Proposed Action

The potential amount of soil disturbed by the Proposed Action in the analysis area is less than 0.0003% of the total area of the allotment. Erosion effects associated with the Proposed Action would not be discernible from past, present, or future actions or from the natural range of variability associated with the landscape, topography, or prevalent climatic variability.

No Action Alternative

No difference would be discernible from the cumulative effects analysis for the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Vegetative Resources

Proposed Action

The proposed action would distribute livestock use throughout the Cove Allotment, thus reducing impacts to vegetation in only specific portions of the allotment. This reduction in stress to plants would increase plant resilience, so that vegetation recovers following various disturbances as described in the past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

No Action Alternative

It is anticipated that the no action alternative in combination with the past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, the current conditions would continue to occur. Higher intensity grazing in other portions of the allotment would reduce plant vigor, thus making these areas more susceptible to weed infestations when other disturbances occur.

Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted:

Organization and Agency Coordination

- Nevada Department of Wildlife

Tribal Coordination

On February 14, 2013, letters were mailed to the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, the Ely Shoshone Tribe of Nevada, the Te-Moak Tribe of the Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada, the Confederated Tribe of the Goshute Reservation, Nevada-Utah and the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe of the Duckwater Reservation, Nevada, extending invitations for tribal consultation regarding the Cove Allotment Fence Extensions Project. The letters received from the Confederated Tribe of the Goshute Reservation and the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah stated they had no comments or issues with the proposed project.

Coordination and Request for Input from Interested Publics

On December 27, 2012, letters were mailed to those parties that had expressed interest in rangeland management activities, inviting them to provide input by January 20, 2013. Comments were received from Nevada Department of Wildlife requesting analysis on mule deer and antelope migration within the project area. No other comments were received.

List of Preparers

Table 1. List of Preparers

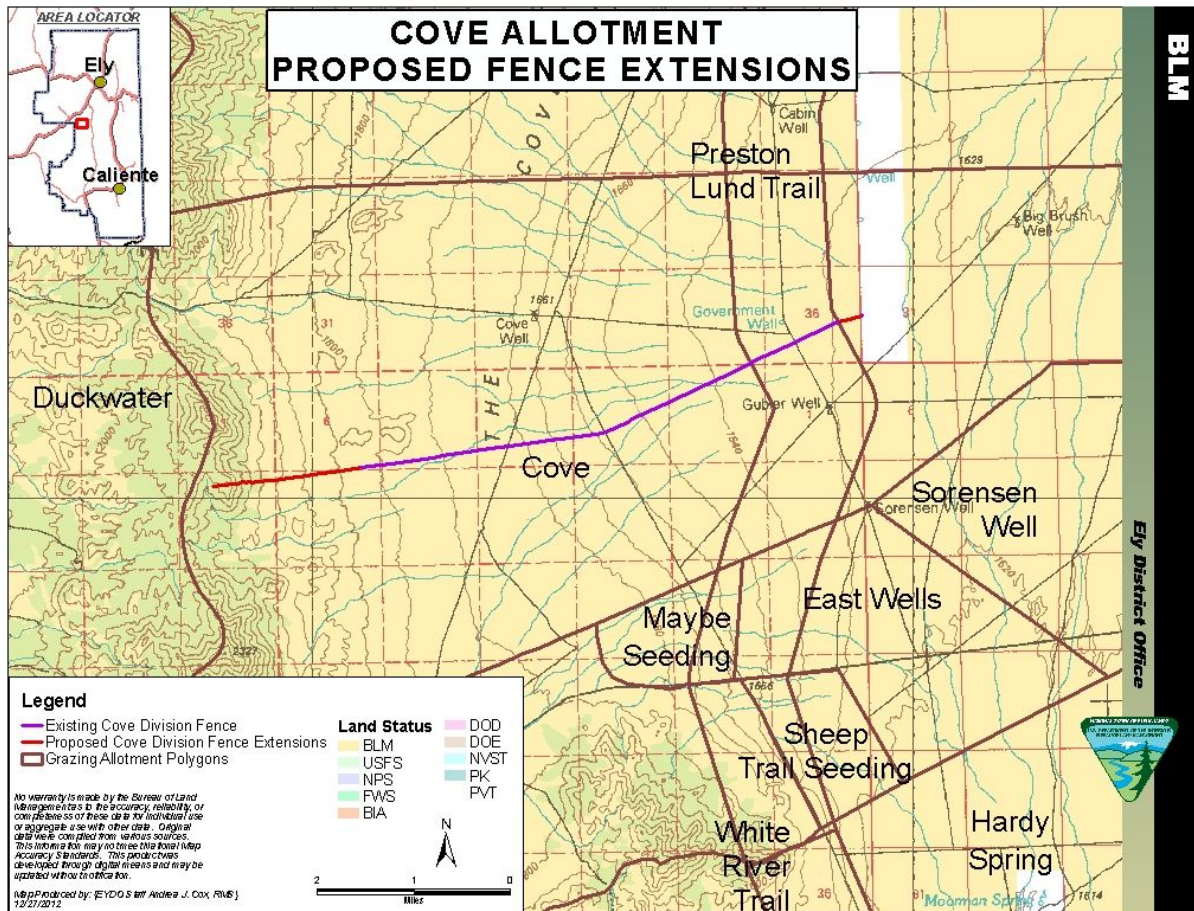
Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Andrea J. Cox	Rangeland Management Specialist	Author, Project Lead, Rangeland Health, Vegetative Resources
Mindy Seal	Natural Resource Specialist	Environmental Justice, Socioeconomics, NEPA Compliance
Marian Lichtler	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, Special Status Species, Migratory Birds
Erin Rajala	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Visual Resources
Lisa Gilbert	Archeologist Technician	Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources
Mark D'Aversa	Hydrologist/Soil Scientist	Air, Soil, Water, Wetlands and Riparian, Floodplains
Elvis Wall	Native American Coordinator	Native American Cultural Concerns
Melanie Peterson	Environmental Protection Specialist	Hazardous Materials, Safety
Miles Kriedler	Geologist	Mineral Resources
Stephanie Trujillo	Realty Specialist	Lands, Realty
Chris McVicar	Noxious and Invasive Weed Coordinator	Noxious and Invasive, Non-native Species

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Maps



Map 1. Cove Allotment Proposed Fence Extensions

Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds

Cove Allotment Fence Extension and Douglas Point/Douglas Canyon Allotment Boundary Fence

On November 5, 2012 a Noxious & Invasive Weed Risk Assessment was completed for Cove Allotment Fence Extension and Douglas Point/Douglas Canyon Allotment Boundary Fence in Nye and White Pine Counties, NV.

The proposed action on the Cove Allotment is to construct two sections of fence, totaling less than two miles, to complete the existing fence, which would divide the Cove Allotment into two pastures.

The need for the action is to encourage prevention of repeated or constant use of vegetation in particular area and provide an additional tool to promote a rotational grazing system.

The proposed action on the Douglas Point and Douglas Canyon Allotments is to construct an allotment boundary fence, with a total length of less than one mile

The need is to alleviate unauthorized use and prevent livestock drifting from Douglas Point Allotment to the Douglas Canyon Allotment and conversely from the Douglas Canyon Allotment to the Douglas Point Allotment.

There would be no new roads constructed for the installation and maintenance of these new fences.

No field weed surveys were completed for this project. Instead the Ely District weed inventory data were consulted. Within 3 miles of either project, one Hoary Cress (*Lepidium draba*) infestation was documented and successfully eradicated in 2011. There are no other known noxious weed infestations within 3 miles of either project.

The project area was last inventoried for noxious weeds in 2010. Below is a list of undocumented species found on the Ely District that may be present along roads near the projects.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Cheatgrass	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>
Bur Buttercup	<i>Ceratocephala testiculata</i>
Kochia	<i>Kochia scoparia</i>
Halogeton	<i>Halogeton glomeratus</i>
Russian Thistle	<i>Salsola kali</i>

Factor 1 assesses the likelihood of noxious/invasive weed species spreading to the project area.

None (0)	Noxious/invasive weed species are not located within or adjacent to the project area. Project activity is not likely to result in the establishment of noxious/invasive weed species in the project area.
Low (1-3)	Noxious/invasive weed species are present in the areas adjacent to but not within the project area. Project activities can be implemented and prevent the spread of noxious/invasive weeds into the project area.
Moderate (4-7)	Noxious/invasive weed species located immediately adjacent to or within the project area. Project activities are likely to result in some areas becoming infested with noxious/invasive weed species even when preventative management actions are followed. Control measures are essential to prevent the spread of noxious/invasive weeds within the project area.
High (8-10)	Heavy infestations of noxious/invasive weeds are located within or immediately adjacent to the project area. Project activities, even with preventative management actions, are likely to result in the establishment and spread of noxious/invasive weeds on disturbed sites throughout much of the project area.

For this project, the factor rates as Low (1) at the present time. The only documented noxious weed infestation within 3 miles of either project was successfully eradicated. Since no new roads will be constructed, disturbance will be very limited.

Factor 2 assesses the consequences of noxious/invasive weed establishment in the project area.

Low to Nonexistent (1-3)	None. No cumulative effects expected.
Moderate (4-7)	Possible adverse effects on site and possible expansion of infestation within the project area. Cumulative effects on native plant communities are likely but limited.
High (8-10)	Obvious adverse effects within the project area and probable expansion of noxious/invasive weed infestations to areas outside the project area. Adverse cumulative effects on native plant communities are probable.

This project rates as Low (1) at the present time. Should a new noxious weed infestation be discovered, treatment is very likely to be swift and effective. Since the projects will disturb very little ground, very little potential exists for noxious weed spread.

The Risk Rating is obtained by multiplying Factor 1 by Factor 2.

None (0)	Proceed as planned.
Low (1-10)	Proceed as planned. Initiate control treatment on noxious/invasive weed populations that get established in the area.
Moderate (11-49)	Develop preventative management measures for the proposed project to reduce the risk of introduction of spread of noxious/invasive weeds into the area. Preventative management measures should include modifying the project to include seeding the area to occupy disturbed sites with desirable species. Monitor the area for at least 3 consecutive years and provide for control of newly established populations of noxious/invasive weeds and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.
High (50-100)	Project must be modified to reduce risk level through preventative management measures, including seeding with desirable species to occupy disturbed site and controlling existing infestations of noxious/invasive weeds prior to project activity. Project must provide at least 5 consecutive years of monitoring. Projects must also provide for control of newly established populations of noxious/invasive weeds and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.

For this project, the Risk Rating is Low (1). This indicates that the project can proceed as planned as long as any new or existing noxious weed infestations are treated as soon as possible.

Reviewed by:	/s/Chris McVicars	11/15/2012
	Chris McVicars	Date
	Ely District Noxious & Invasive Weeds Coordinator	

Migratory Birds

The following data reflect survey blocks and/or incidental sightings of bird species within the allotment boundaries from the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada (Floyd et al. 2007). These data represent birds that were confirmed, probably, or possibly breeding within the allotment boundaries. These data are not comprehensive, and additional species not listed here may be present within the allotment boundary.

No survey blocks or incidental sightings occur within in these allotments. Survey blocks with similar vegetation as these allotments, located near them, contained the following bird species:

American kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

American robin (*Turdus migratorius*)

black-billed magpie (*Pica hudsonia*)

brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)

black-headed grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

*Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*)

bushtit (*Psaltiriparus minimus*)

Cassin's finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*)

chukar (*Alectoris chukar*)

common nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)

common poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*)

common raven (*Corvus corax*)

dusky flycatcher (*Empidonax oberholseri*)

European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

*greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

green-tailed towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*)

house wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)

mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)

rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*)

*sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*)

Savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculates*)

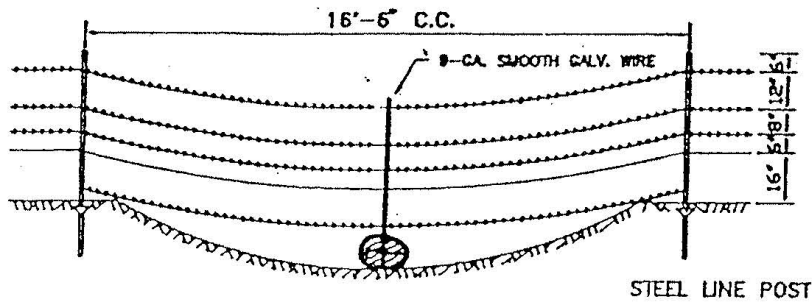
turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Acronyms

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DR	Decision Record
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FMUD	Final Multiple Use Decision
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
ID	Interdisciplinary
IM	Instructional Memorandum
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
RFFA	Reasonably Foreseeable Future Action
RMP	Resource Management Plan
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOI	United States Department of the Interior

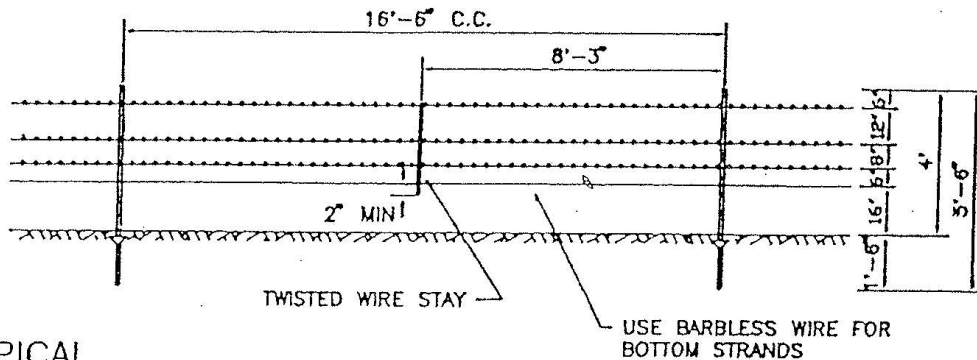
BLM Fence Drawings and Specifications

Figure 3. Fence Specifications



PANEL AT MINOR DEPRESSION

ADD ADDITIONAL STRANDS OF BARBED WIRE AND/OR A ROCK DEADMAN (MIN. WEIGHT 50LB.) WHEN SPACE BETWEEN BOTTOM WIRE AND GROUND EXCEEDS 20 IN.



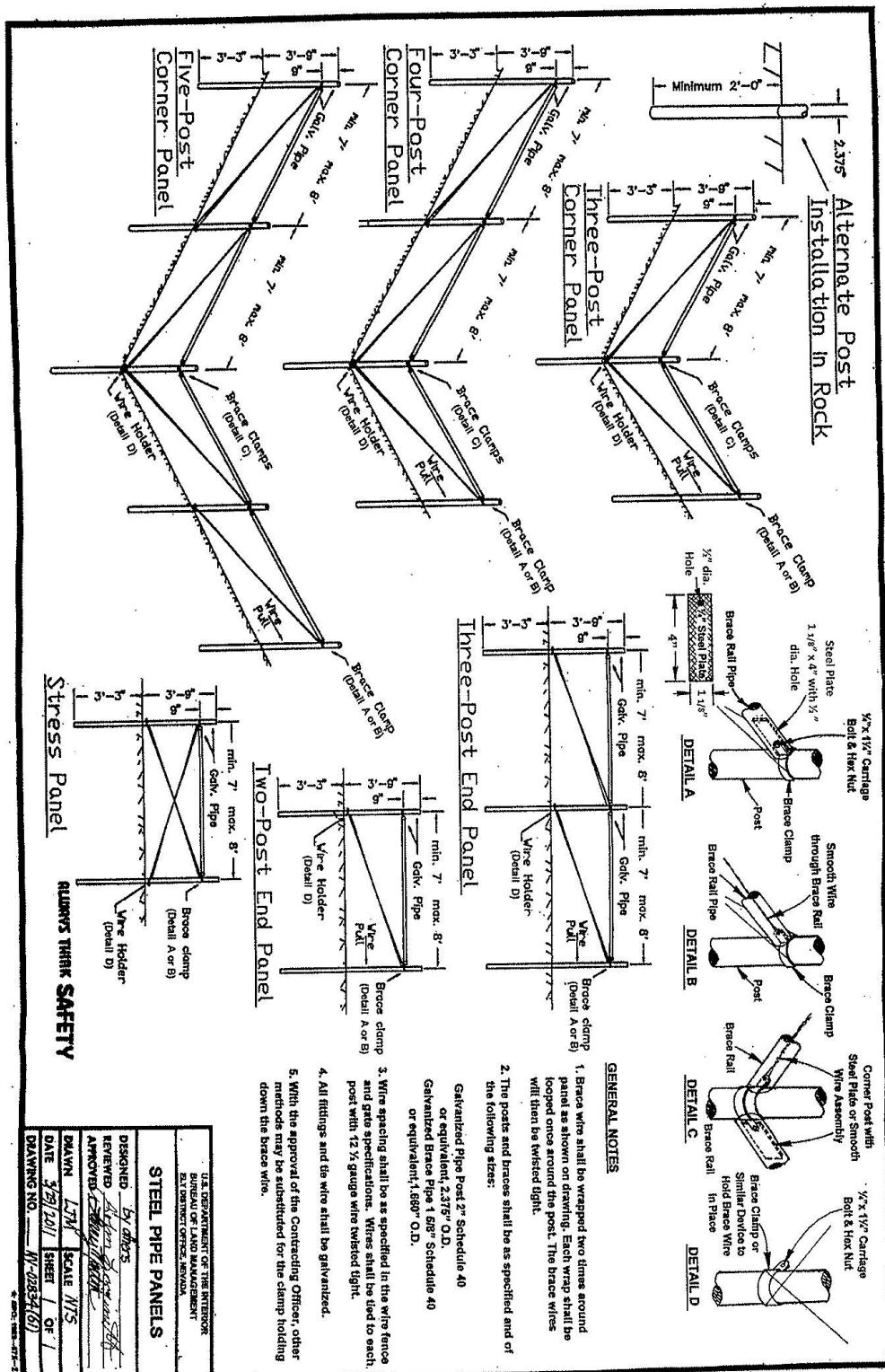
TYPICAL LINE PANEL

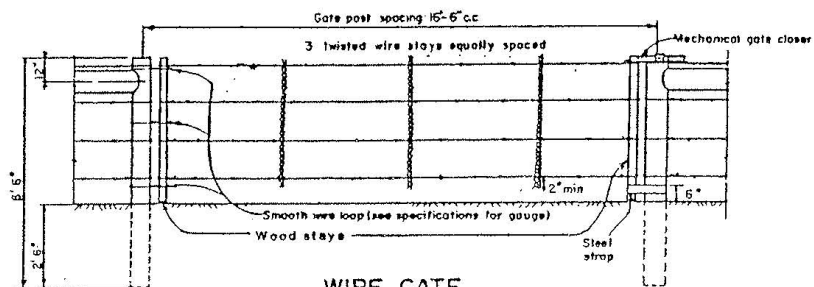
GENERAL NOTES:

1. A STEEL LINE POST DRIVEN A MINIMUM OF FOUR FEET INTO THE GROUND MAY BE USED IN LIEU OF A ROCK DEADMAN AT MINOR DEPRESSIONS.

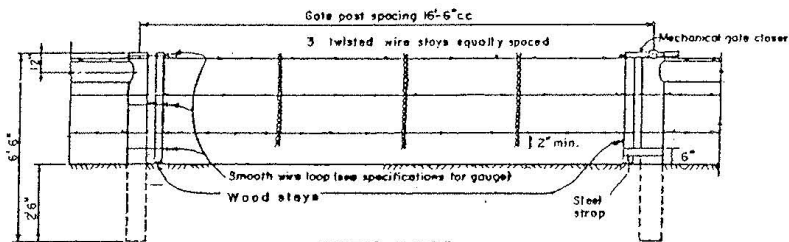
ALWAYS THINK SAFETY
123

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Branch of Engineering		NSO
BARBED WIRE FENCE NV (4-WIRE x 16½')		
DESIGNED	BY OTHERS	
REVIEWED	<i>[Signature]</i>	
APPROVED	<i>[Signature]</i>	
DRAWN	J.L.C.	SCALE 1" = 4'
DATE	8/90	SHEET 12 OF 15
DRAWING NO.	NV-02834-53	





WIRE GATE
TYPE A



WIRE GATE
TYPE B

NOTES:

1. See specifications for type of gate to be used.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT BRANCH OF ENGINEERING NEVADA STATE OFFICE	
TYPICAL WIRE GATES	
DESIGNED OTHERS	
REVIEWED <i>James O. Johnson</i>	
APPROVED <i>George R. Clark</i>	
DRAWN OTHER	SCALE NONE
DATE JAN 1988	SHEET OF
DRAWING NO. NV - 02833 - 8	

 ALWAYS THINK SAFETY